

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only

received DEC 6 1983
date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Abraham Lowenstein House

and/or common Same

2. Location

street & number 217 N. Waldran^{Blvd.} Boulevard N/A not for publication

city, town Memphis N/A vicinity of

state Tennessee code 047 county Shelby code 157

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
			<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Dr. Charles Long, Martha Long, Walter Long

street & number 651 S. Belvedere Boulevard

city, town Memphis N/A vicinity of state Tennessee 38104

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Office of the Shelby County Register, County Clerk

street & number 160 N. Main Street

city, town Memphis state Tennessee 38103

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title N/A has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date N/A N/A federal state county local

depository for survey records N/A

city, town N/A state N/A

7. Description

Condition excellent good fair deteriorated ruins unexposed**Check one** unaltered altered**Check one** original site moved

date _____

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Constructed in 1901, the Abraham Lownstein House is a two-and-one-half story residence of quarry-faced ashlar veneer in a variation of the Queen Anne style. The structure is essentially square in plan with its primary axis oriented east/west, and its main entrance facing Waldran Blvd. The building is sited on a large, informally landscaped lot, measuring 147' on Waldran, and 232' deep. The house is located in a small residential area primarily of two-story apartment buildings adjacent to the city's medical center, containing the major hospitals of Memphis. The building retains a high level of its architectural integrity.

The design of the structure combines a full, spirited use of the forms and elements of the Queen Anne style, with the addition of Romanesque Revival and Colonial Revival details in certain areas on the facade. Major forms project from the facades to delineate and reflect important elements of the floor plan while also acting as crucial expressions of the exterior design.

The eastern (front) facade is dominated by a polygonal tower that rises as a two-story projecting bay to an open porch on the third story. The tower is surmounted by a polygonal roof that is supported by colonnettes of Tuscan shafts and Romanesque capitals. The central portion of the facade features a large, one-story porch with similar treatment of columns and pilasters with Tuscan shafts and Romanesque capitals. The porch also features unique drainspouts intended to carry surface water away from the porch floor which are decorated with a bird's head motif.

The front porch frames the principal entrance at center, which is composed of a glass and wooden paneled door surrounded by a plain composition of transom and sidelights. A wrought metal security door has recently been installed on the front entrance. A massive, plain stone lintel spans the entire entrance composition.

To the left of the entrance is a large Palladian window treatment that allows light into the front parlor. The window features exaggerated rusticated voussoirs in the arch, which contain a keystone decorated with an acanthus motif. Squat Doric pilasters separate the sidelights of the window. The entire composition rests upon a single frieze containing an egg and dart molding at the foundation line.

Directly above the entrance is a relief panel of stone decorated with a laurel wreath and torch motif as an accent to the facade. (This motif is continued in the cornice molding of the front parlor.) In addition to the tower roof, the roofline of the facade also features a massive dormer of stone which contains a pair of 1 x 1 double-hung sash lights, a small blank croissette panel above, and a stone eave containing a curled acanthus leaf motif at the lower terminus. A large gable is centered in the roof above the Palladian window on the first floor. The gable reflects this other element of the facade in the design of its Palladian window, which contains a 1 x 1 double-hung sash light in the central element, and fixed light on the sides.

The southern (side) facade contains a large, one-story porch at the eastern corner of the structure with its access from the front parlor through French doors. The porch is constructed of quarry-faced ashlar to the height of the porch rail. Stone columns and pilasters with Tuscan shafts and Romanesque capitals support the half-hipped porch roof.

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The facade also contains a massive, projecting three-story polygonal bay that juts above the roofline at the second story. A full entablature is featured along the eaves of the entire facade. In addition to the bay projection, the roof features two dormers of different sizes; one containing a single 1 x 1 double-hung sash light, the other containing a pair of 1 x 1 double-hung sash lights. Both dormers appear to have been added to the roof plan at a later date than the original construction.

The northern (side) facade was designed to be considerably less important than the eastern (front) and southern (side) facades, and therefore is relatively simple in appearance. The major feature of the facade is the porte-cochere and side entrance. The porte-cochere is composed of a high base, upon which rest the square, paneled stone pillars with Romanesque capitals. A massive stepping stone rests below the side entrance. The side entrance is composed of a six-panel door surrounded by thin sidelights.

The western (rear) facade is quite plain in design, and contains as its major feature a two-story wooden ell. The lower part of the ell is clapboarded and contains small, 4 x 4 double-hung sash lights along with the back door for the structure. The upper level forms a sun porch, which is glazed with single lights.

The plan and details of the interior spaces follow the general rules of late Victorian architecture, in that a complex arrangement of public and semi-public rooms is featured on the first floor, while the upper floors display less formally detailed rooms arranged around a central hall plan. Two stairs are included in the plan: a grand stair leads from the L-shaped entrance hall and side hall only to the rooms of the second floor; and a back servant's stair that provides the only access to the third floor, also services all other floors, including full basement.

The first floor plan contains many aspects of late-Victorian open-space planning, which allows a series of rooms to be opened up for large gatherings or closed off for more private use. Each room exhibits a special character in design and detail -- the more formal the space, the more elaborate its design and detail.

A large entrance hall lies beyond the front entrance of the structure, which is notable for its elaborate Colonial Revival fireplace and mantelpiece that contains a Palladian mirror. The stair to the second floor was placed at the northwest corner of the hall, and parallels the side hall that leads to the porte-cochere. Through a sliding double door to the left of the entrance hall lies the parlor which contains a massive fireplace with a Colonial Revival detailed mantelpiece on the southern wall with the side porch. A massive cove cornice decorated with a festooned laurel wreath and torch motif strung with garlands (the wreath and torch motif is not unlike the decorative stone panel featured on the exterior above the front entrance) connects the ceiling to the walls above the windows. An L-shaped built-in bookcase or curio cabinet was located on the eastern and northern walls of the room; sadly, this important feature has been lost to vandalism of the property.

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To the west of the parlor lies the dining room, which is connected to the parlor by a wide sliding double door. The dining room is unusual not only for its polygonal shape but also for its ancillary space -- a small raised stage area that lies along the western wall. The stage is set behind a screen that features a low wide arch at center flanked by two semi-circular arched openings on either side. The screen is divided and supported by Doric columns with Tuscan shafts; a frieze that runs above the arcade is supported on either end by Doric pilasters. While the staged area was probably used for musical performances at parties and other gatherings, it was most likely used daily for informal family dining. Of further note in the formal dining room is the massive, elaborately detailed plaster cornice, which is placed at a point just above the window and door heads. The cornice is composed of a shallow cove that features a dentiled molding at its upper terminus. A complex design of fruits, flowers and foliage decorates the wide curve of the cove mold.

Through a sliding double door to the right of the entrance hall lies a sitting room or study in the northeast corner of the first floor. Of all major rooms of the first floor, the sitting room is the most simple in its decorative treatment. The room does not display the elaborate plaster cornices seen elsewhere, but does use a sweeping cove to integrate all wall and ceiling surfaces with an unbroken curve. Due to the small size of the room, this treatment leaves little in the way of flat ceiling surfaces and thus gives the impression of a vaulted ceiling.

The remainder of the space on the first floor is given over to the kitchen, larder, and butler's pantry along the western side of the structure.

The second floor of the structure contains a number of bedrooms grouped around the L-shaped corridor that links the front stair hall to the back stair hall. Finishes in the individual rooms are much less elegant than the first floor, but none-the-less reflect use as the family sleeping quarters. Bedrooms are paired around shared bathrooms, some of which contain single sliding doors to separate bed from bath. All bathrooms contained marble wainscoting and tiled floors -- sadly, these have been nearly destroyed through vandalism. All rooms contained fireplaces with mantelpieces which have also been removed from the premises by vandals. There are now appropriate c. 1900 replacements.

The third floor of the structure appears to have primarily served as the living quarters for the house servants. The plan of the floor consists of small bedrooms arranged around a central hall. Finishes and details in these rooms are very modest in comparison with those used on lower floors. It appears possible that some of the rooms along the southern side possibly may have once been united as a single large room which may have been used for storage, given the lack of original windows in this area. Dormers seen on the roof in this area were apparently added at a later date, perhaps in ca. 1946 when the property was used by the Elizabeth Club. Another area of interest is the room in the northeast corner, which contains the access door to the tower porch. The room may have been used as a bedroom for the servants, but was more likely used as a nursery, sewing room, or private sitting room for a member of the family.

Of further note is the ventilation hatch centered in the plan in the hall ceiling. The shaft contains a large, motor driven fan that could be lowered into the hatch during the appropriate season to draw air through the entire house. A ventilator was once located in the small flat area of the roof above to provide exhaust for the excess heat. The ventilator has now been removed and replaced by a modern skylight.

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There are no outbuildings on the property. The grounds are informally landscaped with several mature trees and shrubs. The cast stone urns and lions at the front entrance were placed there by the current owners.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/ humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

Specific dates	1901	Builder/Architect	Unknown
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Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Abraham Lowenstein House is being nominated under National Register criteria A, B and C. The significance of the building lies in its architectural distinction and its association with one of the most prominent Jewish merchant families in Memphis and with the Beethoven Club, the city's oldest music organization. The house is among the finest Queen Anne residences in Memphis and West Tennessee. Its builder, Abraham Lowenstein (1835-1922), was one of the four German immigrant brothers whose large department store chain prospered in the city from 1855 to 1982. After the death of Abraham Lowenstein, the house was the home of the Beethoven Club (est. 1888) from 1922 to 1946 during which time the organization contributed greatly to the cultural activities of Memphis by bringing the most prominent musical artists of the period to perform in the city.

The design of the Lowenstein House shows a free use of the forms and elements of the Queen Anne style, with the addition of Romanesque and Colonial Revival details. The multiple gables, corner tower and irregularity of massing illustrate some of the major Queen Anne characteristics found in the house. Motifs from the Romanesque and Colonial Revival styles can be seen in the foliated capitals of the porches, the Palladian windows, and interior doors and mantels. The first floor of the Lowenstein House contains some of the finest turn-of-the-century, decorative plasterwork in Memphis and West Tennessee. Although the name of the building's architect has not been found, it is known that the Kasner Cut Stone Company of Memphis was responsible for supplying the excellent stonework for the house. The qualities of style, craftsmanship and materials evident in the structure stand as significant examples of the architectural work of the period.

The Lowenstein House was built in 1901 for Abraham L. Lowenstein (1835-1922), one of the four Lowenstein brothers who saw their small drygoods company develop into one of the largest department stores in Memphis. The B. Lowenstein and Brothers Company had its beginning in 1855 when a German immigrant, Benedict Lowenstein, opened a clothing store at 242 N. Main Street in downtown Memphis. Within a few years the business expanded by 1869 to include two of Benedict's brothers, Elias and Bernard, who were later joined by Abraham. After surviving the yellow fever epidemics of the 1870s, the retail division of the company moved to the larger Goodlet Building at 61 N. Main Street, which in turn became too small and the store moved in 1906 to the Hunter Building at 39 N. Main Street. By the 1920s Lowenstein's was the city's largest department store, and in 1924 it moved to its most palatial building at Main and Monroe. In 1967 the store was to move one last time during its 127 year history to a smaller and more modern structure at 85 N. Main. The bankruptcy of its parent company, City Stores of New York, forced the closure of Lowenstein's in 1982.

After Abraham Lowenstein died in 1922, his house was bought by the Beethoven Club -- the oldest and largest organization of music lovers in the Memphis community at the time.

9. Major Bibliographical References

See Continuation Sheet

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property approx. one acre
Quadrangle name Northwest Memphis, Tennessee

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References

A

1	5	7	7	1	1	5	0	3	8	9	3	0	6	0
Zone			Easting				Northing							

B

Zone			Easting				Northing							

C

Zone			Easting				Northing							

D

Zone			Easting				Northing							

E

Zone			Easting				Northing							

F

Zone			Easting				Northing							

G

Zone			Easting				Northing							

H

Zone			Easting				Northing							

Verbal boundary description and justification

See Continuation Sheet

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state N/A code N/A county N/A code N/A

state N/A code N/A county N/A code N/A

11. Form Prepared By

name/title T. Elizabeth Goode
Lloyd Ostby, Coordinator of Field Services

organization N/A date August 1983

Tennessee Historical Commission 3439 Southern Avenue, #8 901-454-2667

street & number 701 Broadway telephone 615-742-6723

city or town Memphis state Tennessee 38112

Nashville state Tennessee 37203

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer signature Herbert L. Boyer

title Executive Director, Tennessee Historical Commission date 11/21/83

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I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

Entered in the National Register date 1/5/84

Allores Byers
Keeper of the National Register

Attest: _____ date _____

Chief of Registration

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Founded in 1888, the society in its almost one hundred year history has brought to Memphis the world's most distinguished performing artists. During the time that the Lowenstein House was its headquarters, the organization sponsored major appearances by Artur Rubenstein, Vladimir Horowitz, Jasha Heifitz, and many others. Since its beginning, the Beethoven Club has also financially furthered the careers of young local artists and has promoted the musical awareness of children in Memphis through its junior group, the oldest musical organization for young people in the United States. In addition to having the offices of the society, the Lowenstein House was the location of important receptions and small concerts.

In 1946, the building again changed hands, this time being chosen as the quarters for the Elizabeth Club - an institution that served as a shelter and home for young women coming to Memphis to work. The organization also provided an educational fund for those women who needed additional assistance.

After the Elizabeth Club ceased its work at the Lowenstein House, the building changed hands several times until being bought by the present owners Dr. and Mrs. Charles Long and their son. The house is now undergoing a complete restoration and will be used as a residence or for professional offices.

Other Memphis buildings associated with the Lowenstein family, previously listed on the National Register, are the Elias Lowenstein House, the B. Lowenstein & Bros. Building, and three commercial buildings in the Court Square Historic District (39, 61, and 64-68 N. Main). It is believed that the nomination of the Abraham Lowenstein House completes the documentation of the extant buildings connected with this important Memphis family.

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Verbal boundary description and justification

The nominated property is bounded on the east by N. Waldran Blvd. and on the other three sides by adjoining property lines. The nomination includes only the land currently conveyed with the house and needed to protect the architectural and historical integrity of the building.